

Congresswoman Kaptur continued her outreach to constituents on health care and the economy during a very successful telephone town hall meeting. Approximately 2,500 people participated in the call and several hundred people were on the line with the congresswoman at any given time!

Congresswoman Kaptur fielded 18 calls during the one-hour session; other callers were able to leave messages on an answering machine if they still had questions.

The majority of questions pertained to health care and the current reform proposals.

Congresswoman Kaptur was joined on telephone town hall meeting by Dr. Ken Bertka, a family physician, and Wendell Primus, a health care advisor to House Democrats.

Under the Democratic reform proposals, "if you like your current plan, you keep it," Congresswoman Kaptur said. "If you don't like it, or if you don't have any insurance, the bill being developed will provide additional options for you under a health insurance exchange . . . You keep what you have if you like it. That is fundamental, because we have a 50-state insurance system and the goal of this is to give you more choices than you have today." She said Americans would have a better choice of insurance plans and would still choose their doctors and health care providers.

Kaptur restated her strong support of Medicare, the government health care program for seniors, and said current reform proposals are aimed at strengthening Medicare, not weakening it. Medicare currently covers almost 45 million Americans, including more than 1.8 million Ohioans.

Congresswoman Kaptur noted the "misinformation" that is being spread about health care reform. "It's true that the insurance companies that have been operating in the 50 states, and sometimes have monopolies in a given market, and the pharmaceutical companies are uncomfortable and they are putting up a fight to try to avoid any change . . . If we want to talk about economic growth, 17% of our economy is devoted to the health insurance, and that is double what is spent in all Western democracies that have a standard of living equal or better than ours. Why is that? One of the reason is there are some exorbitant profits being made across this system."

She said that "end of life" counseling would be covered in the bill, but not required for any patient. "The only language in the bill that deals with this just encourages, if you're in a plan, for you to talk about this with your physician," she said. Dr. Bertka said the reform proposal "actually allows Medicare to pay for end-of-life counseling for those patients who want it ... There's nothing in the bill that mandates it. It's up to the patient and their physician."

Congresswoman Kaptur said small business is a special area of concern to her, noting that 27 million Americans who work in small businesses lack health insurance. "I am determined as a member of Congress to cover small business. I want to get it right for small business. There are enormous opportunities in this bill for small business. I've been meeting with the

small business community in order to try to clarify and understand if they are comfortable with this because there are a lot of small businesses that have insurance that are satisfied with their plans. Most of them that I meet with don't like them because they are too expensive, they have too many exclusions, or they can't get insurance period, particularly those that have three to 10 employees."

Congresswoman Kaptur also took questions about pension coverage, green energy jobs in Northwest Ohio, and the growing percentage of U.S. debt held by foreign interests, particularly China.

To listen a recording of the telephone town hall, click on the large icon on the right hand side of Congresswoman Kaptur's home page. It has occupied a prominent place on the home page since last Friday morning with a photograph of a microphone and words that read, "Listen to Our Recent Tele-Town Hall Meeting." Just move your cursor onto that "icon," and double click to download the recording. It's easy!